

EDUCATOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS BOARDS

Overview

- Educator regulation involves: 1) standards-setting (i.e., policy-making), in many areas; and 2) administration of both certification and educator preparation programs (approval and oversight).
 - In Connecticut, educator regulation is ultimately the responsibility of the State Board of Education (SBE) and the State Department of Education (SDE).
 - Two educator professional standards boards are advisory.
- Connecticut regulates professions similar to educator in a variety of ways.
 - Professional standards boards, where they exist, have sole authority only over discipline; their standards-setting role is advisory and few have their own staff.
- No research was found during the study linking educator standards boards, at any level of authority, to better teacher or student performance.
- States similar to Connecticut regulate educators through a range of governance models, from a full scope autonomous professional standards board to a narrowly focused standards board that is advisory.
- Many Connecticut stakeholders expressed a preference for a different model of educator regulation, and several alternatives may be considered.

Options

- Seven options, which vary in terms of duties and authority level, are discussed in the report and summarized in the attached table; no single option would satisfy all stakeholders.
- The options are based on intended aims or issues voiced by Connecticut stakeholders during this study, or were found through committee staff's research on case study states.
- Because authority level is a key component of designing a standards board, each level's strengths and weaknesses (based on case study states), as well as Connecticut-specific considerations, are highlighted below.

Key Points

Advisory boards (Options 1, 2, and potentially 3) have no decision-making authority.

- **Strengths**: Useful to education department and board members; can be department's helpful advocate for proposals when used early in process; helps ensure feasibility of proposals through input from varied sources.
- **Weaknesses**: Broad scope might lead to fluctuation in role; board success relies on key positions (e.g., board chair) that change over time; members and stakeholders may feel devalued if suggestions not acted upon.
- **Connecticut considerations**: Options with a strong advisory board would remedy current system's deficiencies, but not satisfy stakeholders who want authority to set and/or administer policies. No independent staffing or funding required.

Semi-autonomous boards (Option 3) share decision-making authority with the state board of education.

- **Strengths**: Joint authority ensures board's voice is heard; may help foster collaborative atmosphere between standards board and policymakers; can fit most other models.
- **Weaknesses**: Creates additional level of bureaucracy for regulation approval, which may increase time or stall changes; when major differences arise between standards board and state board of education, veto and override process may be cumbersome; might lead to both standards board and state board of education being unhappy about level of authority.
- **Connecticut considerations**: Option with policy-originating semi-autonomous board would balance SBE and standards board authority and influence. Some are concerned about creating additional bureaucracy and the potential for delays in policy-making. Minimal independent staffing or funding likely required.

Autonomous boards (Options 4-7) have decision-making authority and potentially administrative responsibilities.

- **Strengths**: In either teacher or educator majority, wide variety of input is heard and acted on; boards often work through consensus; brings greater focus to educator standards.
- **Weaknesses**: May face similar resource limitations as education department; splitting resources and duties between standards board and education department can have negative consequences (e.g., tension over resources, work quality, and increased burden on stakeholders that have to work with both bodies).
- **Connecticut considerations**: Many stakeholders prefer standards board with authority. Few support moving to a full scope autonomous board (Option 7) at this time. State board of education and SDE commissioner would lose authority. Substantial independent staffing and funding necessary.

Key Points Table. Options for Replacing Connecticut's Current Educator Professional Standards Boards							
	1: Strong policy advisory role	2: Strong policy advisory role & limited admin.	3: Policy originating (advisory or semi-autonomous)	4: Policy authority & limited admin.	5: Certification policy authority & certification admin.	6: Broad policy authority & prep. program admin.	7: Full policy authority & admin.
<i>Authority level</i>	Advisory		Semi	Autonomous			
<i>Certification policy</i>	Advisory	Advisory	Develop (and joint decision)	Autonomous	Autonomous	Autonomous	Autonomous
<i>Certification admin.</i>	-	Cert. decision appeals	-	Cert. decision appeals	Autonomous	-	Autonomous
<i>Prep. program policy</i>	Advisory	Advisory	Develop (and joint decision)	Autonomous	-	Autonomous	Autonomous
<i>Prep. program admin.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	Autonomous	Autonomous
<i>Discipline</i>	Possible	Possible	Possible	Possible	At least appeals	Possible	Autonomous
<i>Other educator-related policies</i>	Advisory	Advisory	Develop (and joint decision)	Possible	-	Possible	Possible
<i>Increase stakeholder voice</i>	√ Somewhat	√	√	√	√	√	√ Greatly
<i>Board with authority</i>		√	√ (if semi)	√	√	√	√
<i>Decreased State Bd. of Ed. authority</i>		√ Slightly	√ (if semi)	√	√	√	√ Greatly
<i>Emphasizes:</i>	Strengthening current system via mandatory comment	Resolving certification disputes	Developing proposals based on educator experience	Educators developing and setting policy	All certification issues	All policy affects prep. programs	Educators fully setting & administering policy
<i>Staff and funding</i>	None	None	Minimal	Limited	Some	Some	Most
<p>Notes: "Autonomous" means the board would develop and set policies by itself.</p> <p>"Semi-autonomous" or "Semi" means the board would have joint decision-making power with the State Board of Education.</p> <p>"Prep." is preparation; "Admin." is administrative functions (not administrators).</p> <p>"Other Educator-Related Policies" includes: ethical standards; professional expectations; professional development; and teacher evaluation.</p> <p>Discipline (e.g., certificate revocation) could be handled by a board charged only with that task, any of the board options, or the education department.</p> <p>Source: PRI staff</p>							